

Message Text

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ACTION SCSE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY VIENNA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7790

INFO AMCONSUL SALZBURG

UNCLAS VIENNA 1210

3.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CASC, PFOR, US, AU

SUBJECT: INCIDENT INVOLVING MEMBERS OF U.S. OLYMPIC HOCKEY TEAM

1. AMCONSUL SALZBURG HAS INFORMED EMBASSY THAT TWO MEMBERS OF U.S. OLYMPIC HOCKEY TEAM ARRESTED SATURDAY NIGHT, FEBRUARY 20, FOLLOWING TAVERN BRAWL IN INNSBRUCK HAVE BEEN PERMITTED TO LEAVE AUSTRIA. PLAYERS, GARY ROSS AND BOB MILLER, WERE RELEASED TO EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR USOC, COLONEL MILLER, EARLY SUNDAY MORNING. USOC PAID SMALL FINES AND MAY HAVE AGREED TO PAY PROPERTY DAMAGES. AMCONSUL STATED THAT BOTH INNSBRUCK POLICE AND INVESTIGATING JUDGE TREATED INCIDENT LIGHTLY, LATTER DISMISSING IT WITH REMARK THAT "HOCKEY PLAYERS ARE HOCKEY PLAYERS, THEY PLAY VERY HARD".

2. AUSTRIAN PRESS ACCOUNTS STATED TWO PLAYERS HAD ATTEMPTED TO FORCE THEIR WAY INTO TAVERN TO WHICH ACCESS WAS BLOCKED BY MANAGER BECAUSE OF OVERCROWDING, CRASHED DOORS, ASSAULTED TAVERN PERSONNEL AND/OR GUESTS AND, IN TURN, WERE ASSAULTED BY TAVERN'S GUESTS. PLAYERS' CONDUCT WAS GENERALLY ATTRIBUTED TO BAD HUMOR OVER LOSS OF BRONZE MEDAL TO WEST GERMANS.

3. COLONEL MILLER TOLD AMCONSUL THAT TWO PLAYERS, ACCOMPANIED BY PARENTS OF AT LEAST ONE OF THEM, HAD ATTEMPTED TO ENTER PART OF PUBLIC TAVERN, "BAUERNKELLER", THAT HAD BEEN ENGAGED FOR PRIVATE PARTY. BOUNCER AND UNCLASSIFIED

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GUESTS THREW AMERICANS OUT AND BEAT THEM UP, IN RESPONSE

TO WHICH OTHER US HOCKEY PLAYERS IN VICINITY JOINED FRAY THAT BECAME GENERAL BRAWL. SEVERAL PLAYERS WERE SEVERELY BEATEN; ONE SUFFERED JAW INJURY AND CUTS REQUIRING SUTURES, ANOTHER PLAYER REQUIRED SUTURES FOR CUTS FROM BOTTLE BROKEN OVER HIS HEAD. MILLER SAID HE WAS ABLE ONLY WITH DIFFICULTY TO PERSUADE PLAYER'S PARENTS NOT TO SUE TAVERN OPERATOR OR POLICE FOR BRUTALITY.

4. PRESS REPORTS THAT US EMBASSY PAID FINE OR HAS AGREED TO PAY PROPERTY DAMAGES ARE, OF COURSE, NOT TRUE. WHEN INFORMED OF INCIDENT, AMCONSUL CONTACTED BOTH POLICE AND INVESTIGATING JUDGE. POLICE INFORMED HIM OF CIRCUMSTANCES, INCLUDING RELEASE OF PLAYERS INTO CUSTODY OF COLONEL MILLER. POLICE SAID ONE PLAYER HAD BEEN VERY INTOXICATED; OTHER, LESS SO. JUDGE SAID INCIDENT WAS NOT TERRIBLY SERIOUS, OUTCOME WOULD PROBABLY BE SMALL FINES (AS 200-300) PLUS COSTS FOR PROPERTY DAMAGE. FOLLOWING DAY, JUDGE INFORMED CONSUL USOC HAD PAID FINES AND "THERE WOULD BE SOME PROPERTY DAMAGES TO PAY" BUT PLAYERS WERE FREE TO LEAVE COUNTRY. (IN FACT, COLONEL MILLER TOLD AMCONSUL PLAYERS HAD ALREADY LEFT AUSTRIA SINCE, UPON RELEASE INTO HIS CUSTODY, THERE HAD BEEN NO STIPULATION TO CONTRARY.)BUCHANAN

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